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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 001664

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [PL](#)  
SUBJECT: WITH COALITION IN TATTERS AFTER ONE YEAR OF PM  
KACZYNSKI, MANY SEE AN INCREASING LIKELIHOOD OF EARLY  
ELECTIONS

REF: WARSAW 1558 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Kenneth Hillas for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: With his coalition in tatters Prime Minister Jarek Kaczynski on July 27 pulled back -- at least for the moment -- from calling early elections. Many PiS leaders discount opinion polls and believe they could once again come out ahead in elections. More importantly, Kaczynski may believe that he is positioned to eliminate his coalition allies, Samoobrona (SO) and the League of Polish Families (LPR) -- now "united" in an unlikely and unstable new party (League and Self-Defense or LiS) -- from a new parliament and move toward his long-term goal of consolidating PiS's position as the dominant party on the right. Calling early elections is a high risk strategy, and PiS may decide to back down after dealing serious blows to its partners. If they occur, early elections could have significant implications for U.S. policy, especially with regard to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Missile Defense, even if those issues are not primary or determinative campaign themes. The poisoned atmosphere within the coalition -- SO leader Lepper remains under investigation for corruption -- augurs continued political instability absent early elections. End Summary.

After a Year as PM, Kaczynski Starts  
Sounding Out Possible Election Themes  
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¶2. (SBU) With conflict wrecking his government coalition and his personal polling numbers abysmal, PM Kaczynski proclaimed on the July 19 anniversary of his first year in office that "Poland has never had a better government." Kaczynski took credit for Poland's stellar economic performance and boasted of his government's efforts to root out corruption. Most Poles disagree. An opinion poll released the following day showed Poles rating Kaczynski's performance as the worst since 1989, when the first post-Communist government was elected. The best was Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, who immediately preceded Kaczynski, and was hand-picked by him as a quiet expert who would not compete for the political limelight. When his popularity and image as an effective leader grew, Kaczynski ousted him. Most Poles do not credit the government with the strength of the economy. Before being appointed Media Director at the Presidential Chancellery, Michal Kaminski told Poloff that his new job would be to convince Poles to connect the dots between Poland's strong economic performance and the Kaczynski's. The Kaczynski's efforts to fight corruption (for which they are credited) resonate with a large segment of the population.

¶3. (C) While we have seen enough artful dodging before to make any solid predictions difficult, there are indications that PM Kaczynski intends to call for snap elections,

possibly this fall. The PM promised a public announcement on July 27 after conservative daily Dziennik on July 25 laid out a supposed calendar for elections, speculating that the PM would call for the Sejm to be dissolved at its next meeting on August 22, leading to September 30 elections. Many factors seemed to support the speculation. The coalition has been constantly troublesome or embarrassing, and PiS has not been able to use it to achieve their top goal of constitutional reform to create what they call the "Fourth Republic." On July 9 Deputy PM and SO leader Andrzej Lepper was put under investigation for corruption and suspended from government. PiS believes its support is historically underrepresented by polls (as was true running up to the 2005 elections), and can fare no worse than it did last time. Presidential media advisor Michal Kaminski told Charge and Poloff July 27 that PiS could still win an election now. Indeed, PiS's numbers have stayed remarkably steady despite low rankings for the Kaczynskis.

¶4. (C) The Kaczynskis have two competing goals--to build the so-called "Fourth Republic" and to build PiS into a lasting conservative political force. To do the former they need to be in government, but to do the latter they plan to destroy and devour other conservative parties--particularly their coalition partners SO and LPR. Early elections could dramatically reduce or even eliminate the two parties' presence in the Sejm, which some would consider a risk worth taking. Others say the Kaczynskis are now primarily focused on Lech Kaczynski's re-election campaign in 2010, and feel he would be better positioned to win with PiS not in government. PiS leaders may not have a better opportunity than now to succeed in parliamentary elections.

A Fox in the Ducks' House

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¶5. (SBU) On his second try to decapitate and split SO, Kaczynski has been more successful. Under the rubric of efforts to "fight pathologies" and promote "zero tolerance" for corruption, Kaczynski dumped Andrzej Lepper, his Deputy PM and Minister of Agriculture, after Lepper was implicated in a corruption scandal involving bribes for rezoning agricultural land (reftels). Lepper's normally sycophantic followers forced him to reverse his decision to take the party out of the coalition. One-time Lepper confidante Ryszard Czarnecky told Poloff July 27 that he and others would stay in the coalition, leaving Lepper hanging. Kaczynski has also renewed his attacks on LPR leader Giertych, rescinding Giertych's much-criticized publication of a highly nationalistic required reading list for schools.

¶6. (SBU) Lepper and Giertych added a surprising new twist to the already bizarre unfolding political drama with their announcement on July 16 that SO and LPR would merge, creating a new party called "LiS," or "Fox," for "Liga i Samoobrona" (League and Self Defense). Lepper declared the new party would be "as cunning as a fox." A most improbable union, bound only by both leaders' desires to survive possible snap elections, it is a way for Lepper to quiet the revolt within his party. For Giertych, whose party was consistently polling well below the parliamentary threshold, it is a question of political survival. The two leaders are already fighting over primacy.

¶7. (SBU) LiS is desperate to remain in the government (although Lepper himself is out). The atmosphere inside the coalition has become poisonous and bombastic statements are the order of the day. Giertych announced July 21 that he was going on vacation, threatened to sue the PM, and indicated he did not expect to return to his ministerial position afterwards. Lepper has leveled highly personal criticism of PM Kaczynski over the land rezoning scandal and over the government's efforts to lift the parliamentary immunity of former SO deputy Stanislaw Lyzwiniski, the primary antagonist

in a sordid paternity suit and sex-for-work scandal.

Rudderless Opposition  
Continues to Sit Back and Wait  
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¶18. (C) Meanwhile, the opposition, which the PM has charged is Satanically influenced and bent on aggressively opposing any and all of the government's agenda, has been strangely silent, sitting on the sidelines for months as the coalition theatrics play out. PO parliamentarian Pawel Spiewak confided to poloff that PO leader Donald Tusk had made the political calculation that saying anything, on any subject, risked alienating a portion of the electorate, and that PO's consistently higher polling numbers bore out the view that PO will prevail simply because of the self-destructive tendencies of the current government. PO regularly polls higher than PiS in opinion surveys.

Elections Still a Risk for PiS  
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¶19. (C) Despite the indications that PiS is more serious about elections this time, there are still factors militating against them. Kaczynski's failure to make an announcement this week is one indicator. Media advisor Kaminski told us July 27 that PiS still wants to find a "stable majority," but said it is up to LPR and SO to provide that. PiS back-benchers naturally fear putting their jobs at risk. That is even more the case in SO and LPR.

Comment  
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¶10. (C) Comment: The Kaczynskis' square focus is on domestic politics, and when (or whether) to call elections so as to maximize their political advantage. If held, elections would almost certainly revolve around domestic issues, but would also have serious implications for U.S. policy goals if there are elections this fall. Lepper has made clear he will make opposition to Poland's presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, and to Missile Defense, part of his campaign. We do not think he will get much traction, but it will put the issues on the table. Even if these issues are not dominant or determinative, a change of government would have an impact. The momentum on MD negotiations could be lessened, and a PO government would likely take a strong quid pro quo approach to the negotiations. On Iraq and Afghanistan, a new government might not support President Kaczynski's pledge to keep troops deployed through 2008. End Comment.  
HILLAS